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**NEWS** • *of the World*

## No doubt, he is the devil in pyjamas

Bad news for snorers, with a recent study showing they're more prone to heart attacks than quiet slumberers. "The sooner he has one the better," said one sufferer's wife. "Then I can get some sleep." But coronaries aren't the only danger for sputtering snoozers. Yvgeny Berkopf, 45, of Omsk, found that his snortings led to an eight-tonne demolition ball crashing through his ceiling. Trouble started when Mr Berkopf's neighbour, construction worker Ivan Mumstock, came round in the night to ask him to stop

snoring. "My bedroom backs on to his," explained Mr Mumstock, "and I couldn't sleep for his grunting. I slapped him, and forced an aubergine into his mouth, but the noise got louder." Eventually Mr Mumstock stole a 60-foot crane with a demolition ball, drove home and dropped the ball through Mr Berkopf's roof. "Everything went quiet and I thought, 'I'm free'" recalled Mr Mumstock. "But then he cried, 'Just five more minutes, mama' and started snoring again. He is the devil in pyjamas." ♦

## It's a conspiracy with tentacles

Old ladies have been driving exceptionally fast. In Yorkshire, Margaret Fairbairn, 87, was clocked doing 94 mph up the A1. "It's my carpet slippers," she explained. "I can never tell how hard I'm pressing the accelerator." Even faster was American pensioner Dolores Shallowmuck, 96, who drove at 120 mph to warn President Clinton of an invasion from outer space. Ms Shallowmuck, of Pittsburgh, was shopping when she spotted the extraterrestrials on the roof of a skyscraper. "They were green with long tentacles," she explained. "It was like another

Pearl Harbour." Screaming "Spacemen in the sky!" she rushed to her car and set off at high speed towards Washington, beeping her horn all the way and shouting "they've got tentacles" out of the window. She was eventually halted by a police roadblock and, after some investigation, informed that the aliens were actually mountaineers doing a charity climb down the front of an office building. "It's a conspiracy", said a determined Ms Shallowmuck. "The policemen were robots and now I'll be taken to Mars for breeding." ♦

## Binoculars used for driving slowly

Whilst old ladies have been driving very fast, old men haven't. Witness Dennis King, 90, of Bournemouth, England, who was fined 125 pounds for driving his Jaguar at only 9 mph. "I'm no boy racer," admitted the pootling pensioner. Mr King is a veritable Stirling Moss, however, compared with German octogenarian Wilbur Prikmee, who was recently caught driving along an autobahn at 4 mph trying to locate his spectacles. Mr Prikmee, 85, of Munich, had lost his glasses in a field whilst walking his dog. Believing he would get a bet-

ter view of the area from the elevated autobahn, he duly set out in his car, steering with his foot whilst hanging out of the window with a pair of binoculars. Having failed to locate the missing spectacles on his first pass he calmly turned round and proceeded back up the motorway in the wrong direction, all the while scanning the horizon through his field glasses. He was eventually arrested by traffic police. "I'm blind without my specs," explained Mr Prikmee. "It would have been irresponsible not to have looked for them." ♦

## Shotgun wedding toilet scrub

Holidaymakers John and Celia Lemon weren't supposed to be smoking illicit substances, they discovered when they were fined 50 pounds for smoking cigarettes in their hotel bedroom. "I smelt them through the keyhole," recalled hysterical hotelier Maurice Pumpnickel. "Filthy beasts!" In Australia, meanwhile, newlyweds Carl and Belinda Dragon spent their wedding night scrubbing a hotel toilet under armed guard. "We were having a romantic candle-lit lobster dinner when the manager burst into the dining room with a shotgun and shouted

"Who's in 313?" explained Mr Dragon. "I said, 'I am' and then he said You had a poo earlier, didn't you..." "you've left a smudge, now get upstairs." The horrified honeymooners were led to their bedroom where, with a gun pointing at them, they were made to scrub their lavatory "till it shone like the sun", whereupon they were told they "made a lovely couple" and were allowed to return to their meal. "It's like that here," explained one experienced guest. "Last year he almost garrotted someone for leaving a boger on the lampshade." ♦

Above articles compiled by Paul Sussman in *The Big Issue*, London England's street-sold magazine.

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SPARE  
CHANGE

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# Darrell Levesque

B Y C W A T S O N

He rests a black cowboy boot on his knee, leans back, and with a quick, light touch rolls himself a cigarette. He's trim and fit looking so why does Darrell Levesque sell Spare Change at 6th Avenue and 6th Street S.W. in Calgary?



Well, he's not as fit as he used to be when he raced over rooftops in Calgary and small towns fixing hail damage. Or when he wrangled at Rafter Six Ranch or loaded horses into the starting gate at Stampede Park. He's had his share of accidents in construction and with horses. One time he ended up under a horse in the starting gate, after getting the jockey to safety, and suffered two broken vertebrae. "I just kept working, though," he says, "I never claimed. You get used to the pain. I just take mild over-the-counter painkillers now to take the edge off."

Darrell returned to Calgary from Vancouver in October last year for a construction job. The Khan racing stables needed barns and sheds built. "It was a permanent job if I could've kept it," he says, "but on the 10th day of the job I couldn't walk! I was doing too much too fast. Working 11 hours a day. I had a free apartment, meals cooked and a good wage. But, I had to move."

A friend in town gave him a temporary place "then I went to the Booth (hostel)," he says. That's where he learned about Spare Change. "I've gotta be doing something. Can't hang around doing nothing!" In November he started selling. "I find Ed (Greanya) to be a great guy," he says. "He still lets me get more papers even after I've been off for a while."

Darrell moves to T-D Square or to the Mac's store on 8th Street/7th Avenue S.W. on days when it's slow. He's getting to know a few customers now.

Darrell's bumper sticker, when he gets a truck, could easily read: "I'd Rather Be Roofing!" He has a guy ready to go with him who knows what he's doing and enjoys it. "I like doing roofing. It's hard work but it's an easy job. I had 12 guys working for me at one time. I used to sub-contract on insurance work. I do construction work, renovations, drywall, things like that. A lot of my customers will remember me if they read this."

For the future Darrell, who's 35, would like to be

"happy, comfortable enough (financially) and have a good place to raise my son. Calgary is my favourite city. It's the best city in Canada. I've always done good here. I've come here broke several times and always done good. Vancouver is a bad place."

He should know. The middle kid of five, he hit the Vancouver streets at age 14 sometime after his parents split up. Survival made him streetwise and determined someday to

have a home. He came close and even owned his own house in Forrest Lawn for a few years.

He has been a widower since December of '94. The dark-eyed, curly-haired, cute kid in the picture he carries with him is his son, Nathan, now six. He lives with Darrell's mother who manages a motel in New Westminster, B.C. "He's done Kung-Fu since he was four. That's the earliest they take them," he says, his eyes shining. "He's a good kid. He just listens and then goes and does it." Darrell wants to move from his shared two-bedroom apartment into a house so he can have Nathan with him again. "You gotta have a house to have a kid," he says. ♦

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- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized

**The people who bring  
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This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **Spare Change** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **Spare Change**. ♦

All **Spare Change** vendors are required to wear an ID badge (contents above) and abide by a code of conduct. If you have any comments about our vendors, phone our distribution manager in your city (see page 7).



## LETTERS

# Ignoring the poor & appeasing the majority

I take home about a thousand dollars a month, and I'm not complaining. I believe that amount puts me somewhere in

between poor and middle class. My income has swung one way or the other over the years. I usually pay two bucks for an issue of the newspaper, which I think is a fair price, whenever I run across one of your vendors.

I will address three issues which are of particular concern to local people - especially those who live in the inner city. (I've lived downtown in Edmonton for about 14 years).

First, there is the 'revitalization scheme' in Edmonton. The new Grant MacEwan campus and the extensions to the artistic and cultural centres around the Citadel Theatre are examples of the changing landscape. What worries me is that lower income people, probably because they hold no political power, are being pushed out of their neighbourhoods to allow this construction. I doubt that a similar programme exists to answer the needs of the poor.

Second, there is the growing 'temp labour' industry. In the past, I have had to rely on these 'services' to provide me with a job. Typically, the company locates an employer who signs a contract that prevents them from negotiating with the worker for a certain length of time after the temporary job is finished. The worker cannot hope to secure a permanent position with the employer.

These 'contractors' are essentially doing what the government programmes have failed to do in the past. They are profiting from the tendency of all levels of government to slash budgets and to force the individual to be responsible for his/her own fate. It is a prelude to the elimination of UIC and retraining programmes. My question is this: If a private company can make money from its own 'work for welfare' idea, why can't the government?

Third, there is a growing myth that the middle classes and upwards are being 'taxed to death'. Political parties of many different stripes are trying to appeal to those who just want their taxes cut, without any thought to the kind of society we will wind up with if nobody looks out for 'the other guy'. This is historically the role of government, in peace-time as well as when wars arise. One person, alone, will rarely see their neighbour's misfortune as their own.

I have never seen anybody die from high taxes, and the logic truly escapes me how politicians plan to lower taxes and pay off the debt at the same time! It is a citizen's responsibility to return some of the wealth he/she has accrued to the community. Sometimes, the only way this may be done is through taxation. Certainly, if it were left up to one's own judgement, nobody would ever stoop to consider those less fortunate than himself.

There is a current which runs through each of these points, and it has several branches. Poor people, as always, are being pushed around because they have no adequate recourse, politically or legally. Myths are being spread by liars who appear to have convinced everybody that it is those who are poorer than one's self who are to blame for one's own financial binds. The government seems to be pleasing itself by the virtual enslavement of its poor citizens.

Often, a letter of this sort will end with a message of hope, or a good solution to the problems at hand. This one won't. While the political climate remains one of ignoring the poor and appeasing the majority of voters, we will witness the continuation of present trends. ♦

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# The perils of an alcoholic

B Y G A R Y

**A**s I am sitting here and doing this writing I am drinking, to be precise, a Big Bear. To you society a Big Bear is a malt liquor, simliar to beer. Being addicted to alcohol is not nice but some of us are. There are people who have very good paying jobs who are also alcoholics but they won't realize it because they have money.

So, when you walk by a person who is dirty and probably drunk and maybe high on some kind of drug, do not judge him or her as you may not be far from there, something just might

happen in your life to go bad, and you will drink to so-called cure the pain. Me, myself, I drink almost every day because I am in pain, I don't like it but that's the way I deal with it. I want to quit but the pains of withdrawal really hurt. I will stop eventually. It will hurt.

So, all you young people, do not start drinking, and anybody who does, stop before it does you in. I may not be a true expert but I know a lot. It is addictive. There are numerous programs out there, but the bottom line is you. Do your best, sometimes your best is not good enough, but try. Not much more to say, good luck. ❖

## "Quotation" Quiz

B Y L . R . C .



"PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASS HOUSES SHOULDN'T THROW ROCKS"



## The things they say

"Best not do that, sir."

— A court clerk in Kenya to a 70-year-old judge who, during a drugs trial, sniffed a large bag of cocaine to find out what it smelt like.

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— Roy Hattersley, MP

"Do you seriously expect me to be the first Prince of Wales in history not to have a mistress?"

— Prince Charles in *The Daily Mail*.

"I'll have my 2,000 pounds now, please."

— A Tory MP at the end of a telephone interview about another Tory MP.

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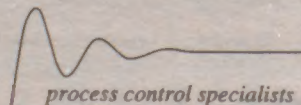
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**D**uring the 1988 Olympics in Calgary, the business community did a magnificent job for "a fun thing" said John Currie, past-president of the Calgary Downtown Business Association. "Business people need to know they are needed in solving the homeless problem. It's fine to provide food and shelters but there needs to be work, or the system unravels," Currie said.

The system is already unravelling at an alarming rate, according to the Special Action Committee on Homelessness which organized the forum. Figures presented by the Action Committee showed the climb: Food Bank demand grew up 20 per cent in one year. The Calgary Drop-in Centre has been operating at 170 per cent occupancy. Connection Housing in Calgary estimates there are 1,200 homeless people in Calgary at any given time, and nearly 150 of those are under the age of 16.

Seven recommendations for new initiatives to cope with homelessness came out of a January Calgary forum where Mayor Al Duerr sat down with John Currie, with Spare Change vendor Ron Meek, and nearly 200 others from all walks of life.

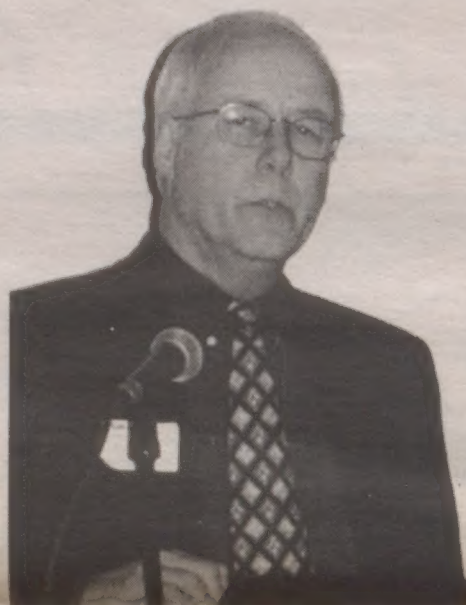
Ron Meek has been homeless for 6 of the past 13 years, "homelessness at its worst is hopelessness and resignation," he told the forum. It is the resignation that keeps people from stepping up and out of the quagmire of shelters and handouts, he said.

Mayor Duerr wanted to "put in place some real action plans" for what he called "an extremely important issue to this city."

The first recommendation - business and community partnerships- followed a keynote address from Jim Ward, a long-time advocate for

# 1200 HOMELESS IN CALGARY

BY CLAUDETTE LANGUEDOC



▲ Ed Johnson, President of the Calgary United Way was there.

## Mayor meets in forum to find solutions



▲ So was Spare Change vander, Ron Meek.

level service for people on the street. Many people who find they are homeless or marginalized are intimidated by bureaucracy. An inviting, easy-to-get-at assistance system could help them from falling through the cracks. ♦

homeless people in Toronto. Ward talked about some of the most successful solutions tried out in Toronto, and they involved not housing but jobs. Business and community partnerships to develop decent employment was a key concept.

Matching up skills and needs was the strategy behind a Toronto inventory of homeless peoples' talents. The result was two new businesses, a cleaning business and a public transport courier business. Completing such an inventory in Calgary was the fourth recommendation from the forum.

Nancy Reilly, a single parent of four children, spoke with eloquence about the frustration of watching her kids being drawn to the streets. have long been recognized as the people hardest hit by poverty. The second recommendation from the forum was to develop strategies to support single mothers. It's families, not just singles like it used to be, who are lining up more and more at soup lines, according to the Salvation Army at the forum.

Mentally ill people are among the most difficult to house, especially when they do not have a good family support system to depend on. The Horizon Housing Society told the participants there are 5,000 to 7,000 "chronically hard to house" people in Calgary. Effective advocacy for people suffering from mental illnesses, as well as advocacy for child welfare and those on social assistance was the sixth recommendation from the forum.

The final recommendation coming out of the forum was for a drop-in centre to serve as an entry-

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# Tough-love drama speaks to human worth

## Spare Change

Helping People Help Themselves

**W**hen the theatre manager called to invite everyone from *Spare Change* to come to the show, a nice gesture on account of *Random Acts of Kindness Week*, we thought how kind. *Spare Change* benefits all the time from *Acts of Kindness*, and being invited to see a new Alberta play seemed nice. It wasn't.

It was hard. The play, *Dirt*, dragged us through it, and didn't smell good. Albertans on welfare were main characters, but, as it turns out they were not the real dirt of the title.

A welfare bum woman is dead – worthless no good scum – she had a pipe driven through her head and her welfare bum boyfriend Murphy is the prime suspect, the only suspect. Murphy leads a sordid little life: selling fish stunk; raising rabbits was a carnage; everything he tried dumped back on him. He's on welfare, a failure, but an industrious one, he tries, just a lot of bad luck. Murphy doesn't think too much of himself, and neither do the cops who accuse him and subject him to humiliating house arrest.

"No skid marks on my long gaunch, see." Murphy says. He's uncouth, gross, disgusting even. But his value, his humanity become quite cherishable. And his barnyard language and behaviour suddenly become almost aristocratic when compared with the behaviour of the detective who accuses and condemns him.

Mrs. Boras pushes her cabbage rolls on Murphy, and slaps him upside the head when he objects. It's a good thing, Mrs. Boras might just say, about getting people off welfare, a slap in the head is all they need. She's a recognizable Albertan.

*Dirt* is all you are when you've bottomed out like Murphy. Useless, no good. Not even worth living.

Lethbridge playwright Ron Chambers made a small leap from this mentality to El Salvador-style "clean-up". Chambers's little leap pushes Alberta small-mindedness to its extreme. *Dirt* goes in the garbage, right?

When government "cleans-up" the welfare roles what are they doing to the people? The statistics go down, it's "success". Maybe in Brazil they call it success if petty thievery is reduced when off-duty cops go out, round up street children and drop their bodies at the dump.

Watching *Dirt* was long and a bit painful. It is a harsh examination of everyday attitudes toward poverty and welfare. Chambers makes us speculate on the worst things these attitudes can lead to. It just wasn't very nice.

It made sense that Theatre Network invited *Spare Change* vendors in to see the play. We are familiar with the sense of worthlessness that poverty, and the community, can push on people.

*Dirt*, the play, an act of kindness? It's a revealing play, in a tough-love soft of way. Sometimes it can be a kindness to reflect back to people what their beliefs and actions really can imply.

## The pleasure of random acts of kindness

If the play *Dirt* is about nasty mean-spiritedness, *Random Acts of Kindness Week*, celebrated in February, is about the opposite. This is a celebration we like to particularly note even if *Acts of Kindness* are what *Spare Change* vendors experience all year long. Helpful and kind people are always giving vendors an encouraging word, talking about their appreciation for our paper. There are countless stories of kind-hearted people giving vendors gifts of money or needed clothing. *Acts of Kindness* are what *Spare Change* vendors know all about even if they are also familiar with the painful side of life and poverty. So we celebrate *Random Acts of Kindness*, and we trust that this side to people will always come forward and overshadow the other. ♦

KEITH WILEY

## Businesses can you help?

Do you know of a great location for one of our newspaper vendors? Would you be willing to host a vendor outside your business? The support of business owners is very important to many newspaper vendors. If you can help, please give us a call, in Edmonton at 423-2285, in Calgary 221-8790. Thank you.

## Thank you contributors

• Steve Gavin and • Linda Dumont for the story about *Fun Time Hockey*, • Steve Simon for the photography, • Candy Watson and • Claudette Languedoc in Calgary • Gary • Donna Morrison • Michael Walters Glasel • Susan Andrews for the crossword puzzle • Allison Kydd • Jeff Page • Richard Home and our artists: • Linda Dumont • Sean Giroux • Lorne Callaghan • David Jones • Ed Gould. And thank you to Mike Glasel and Jodey Timoffee for jumping in with both feet.

A special thank you to Heather Stump for all her wonderful efforts with our Edmonton vendors over the past year. We will miss her. Heather is leaving her position as Edmonton Distribution Coordinator for the paper. ♦

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## Spare Change

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# For a great time on the i

# RANDY GREGG FUN TEAM ALBERTA

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SPARE  
CHANGE  
MARCH 1  
1996

BY LINDA DUMONT

**O**n the blue line he's fast. Skating about he calls himself Shredder, and he's darting back and forth tagging the shrieking little ninjas trying to skate around him. For the kids this is now the real big league. They are playing hockey with Randy Gregg and they love it.

Randy Gregg is best known to most of us as the outstanding defenceman for the Edmonton Oilers in their Stanley Cup winning heyday. Today he's at the Alberta Avenue community league rink coaching some young hockey players.



"I like to see kids participate," Randy says. "Sports can be very positive for their self-esteem. At school they learn from books. Here they learn from sports."

Randy Gregg is founder and president of Fun Team Alberta, that's the non-profit sport and recreation association for children, teens, and adults he started six years ago. At

Alberta Avenue the Fun Team's playing hockey and when Randy's there, it sure builds enthusiasm.

While Gregg concentrated on coaching the young hockey players, I spoke with Grant Bowolin, executive director of Fun Team Alberta. This is the sixth year for the association, and although hockey is the most popular, eight other sporting activities are also promoted. These are baseball, soccer, volleyball, family skate, learn to skate, basketball, floor hockey and football.

You can apply the Fun Team philosophy to any sporting activity. The principles are low cost, non-competitiveness, family or parental involvement, and fair play. At Alberta Avenue, the membership fee has been waived. All equipment for the hockey team has been provided by Sports Central with the exception of the helmets which were purchased with a grant from the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. Wilf Brooks of Alberta Cycle supplied the hockey sticks, tape and pucks.

Leslie Grant is the Fun Team group leader at Alberta Avenue, and is one of the coaches for the hockey group. "I think it is a wonderful opportunity for kids to come out and play hockey," she says, "Since there is no charge, they can play other sports as well without going to a lot of expense. It's an opportunity for kids to get together."

They run twelve teams through there at a cost of \$12,000 per year, says Arden Grant, president of the Alberta Avenue Community League. He feels it's money well spent because of the character development of the children. "We have never turned a kid away," he said, "We'll find a way." Most of the children were driven to the rink from Norwood School by van, and would be driven back to the school after practice.

The boys and girls, aged nine to twelve, wear the colorful Fun Team jerseys. They cluster around Randy who has on his orange and blue Edmonton Oiler gloves. He doesn't talk about the past.

"I'm here as a volunteer," he stressed, "The important thing is not what I used to do but what Fun Team will do for these kids."

Gregg comes out to Alberta Avenue to coach when he can, which is not often. He leads the kids through the warm up game of "Shredder, Shredder", then through drills, and finally coaches a skirmish. As a father of four, with his own team to coach, and holding coaching seminars, he is a busy man. He summed up the purpose of Fun Team Alberta. "Every child has a chance to have fun." Aaron Swan, a veteran Fun Team Player, confirms it. "It's fun cause the first year I never knew how to skate well. They taught me how to skate good," he beamed with pride. ♦





# ice, it's GG'S ERTA



◀ "Shredder"  
Randy Gregg  
gets the kids  
pumped on  
the ice.

Randy lines  
up with the  
Fun Team  
on the ice.



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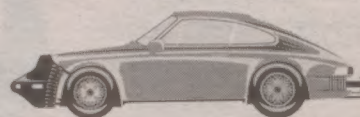
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# BRIGHT LIGHTS

BY DONNA MORRISON

I sit at the rickety table away from everyone and try to read my book. The table is small and I have to move the sugar jar and the shiny stainless steel napkin holder out of my way. I sip my coffee slowly and try to make it last, trying to read, trying to push the almost inaudible lyrics of radio music out of my head.

The lights inside the cafe are bright against the darkness of the night. They are my safety, these lights. I look up from my book. A large clock sits on the cluttered wall behind the counter; two o'clock in the morning. Two waitresses, dressed in identical brown uniforms stand leaning, occasionally pouring a coffee. It's not too busy at this time. Only the regulars now. One woman is quite young. She wears her hair pulled back into a pony tail, fresh-faced and

hopeful. The other woman is older. Her hair stiff and blonde, worn loose about her shoulders. Her make-up heavy: painted on bottom eye lashes, bright rouge, orange-flame lips. She looks at me and smiles. The smile is exaggerated but kind. I look down, embarrassed for staring and I find myself looking at her hands. The nails are chipped. Working hands.

I look at the others. A young man is hunched over a drawing, colour pencils scattered on the counter. Some people watch him draw, the young waitress asks, "What is it this time, Jake?" He looks up smiling and shows the two women his sketch. They gasp with approval. I see another man. He is trying to light a cigarette. His hand shakes badly, he can barely put the cigarette to his mouth.

her. She sits beside Jake while her coffee is being poured and her doughnuts gathered. "So, what have you made for me today, Jake?" Jake presents the now finished picture and I get a glimpse of

Strangely, no one seems to notice. The older waitress fills his cup in a very natural sort of way. No one offers help, no one offers pity. After many agonizing (for me) minutes, he is successful. I exhale as he deeply inhales.

The door opens suddenly, with cold air and wind. Peace is momentarily disturbed. A woman comes in with a four-year old.

The young boy runs to a table and says, "Mom, I want a jelly-doughnut this time!" The young mother chuckles and then says her hellos.

Everyone knows

it. I see a picture of a woman's eyes in the midst of a purple sky. Her eyes are crying, as if tears are rain. The tears fall on a child curled up on a bench. Everyone is silent.

"Here, let me buy you a coffee," the young mother offers, but the waitress shakes her head as she fills his cup. "We got to help out young budding artists," the older waitress says with a wink, yet there is a strange sort of pain behind her eyes.

Jake gets up to go to the washroom and I feel my stomach tighten. He is bent and twisted, his body crippled into a permanent hunched position. I notice he has great difficulty walking, yet he walks just the same and no one stares but me. Shortly afterward, he walks to the counter and reaches, his picture and hobbles towards me. My heart races. I feel afraid and I sit there with this frozen half-smile on my face. He hands me his picture. "I noticed that you were staring at it," he says softly. He waits for me to take it. I reach for the picture, my hand shaking. "Thank you," I whisper. "it's beautiful."

I can feel the tears forming in my eyes. Jake smiles widely and makes his way back to his seat. I place the picture delicately behind book and look down. My face burns. Slowly, the tears come, one by one, wetting the open page. ❖

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*Please get involved.*

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1996



# From the diary of a volunteer

BY MICHAEL WALTERS GLASEL

As I walked through the inner city streets on my way to the Bissell Centre, I really had no idea of what awaited me. Only half an hour before had I left my cozy south-side home. A home filled with wonderful friends, hopes, and laughter. I found myself stepping into a totally different world. One which I knew nothing about.

I passed by buildings that seemed to be lacking a lot of things, compared to what I encountered in my usual digs. It was mostly the upkeep, the physical appearances. A lot of places seemed to be deserted and not cared for any longer, yet with all that seemed missing and forgotten, there was a prominent feeling of life. Life of the present, and of the past.

I suppose one of the main reasons I've had such a keen interest in the inner city over the years, has been because of its age and the history that must come with such a weathered territory.

The sad thing was that it didn't take me long to begin sensing the pain and misery of life around me. Sure, that may sound clichéd when describing any inner city, but who cares. That's exactly how I felt. It was evident in the decrepit appearances of homes and businesses and, most unfortu-

nately, in the people whom I passed. The people only seemed to be smiling at illusion. For the most part they appeared lost and somehow hindered in where they were trying to go.

As I neared my destination I realized that all my thoughts and theories regarding the inner city were about to change drastically. The neglect and suffering I saw and felt around me were as real as anything. This was a reality I again knew nothing about.

I finally arrived at the Bissell Centre about twenty minutes late for my appointment with the volunteer coordinator, because I had walked so slowly, and tried to take in as much as I could. I stepped around a group of people huddled in the front, sharing a cigarette. With my mind and heart open, I pushed open the doors to begin helping



people whose lives I thought to be less fortunate than mine.

I was unaware of exactly what I would be doing there. Within a few minutes however, I found direction: the Spare Change newspaper.

I met initially with the paper's manager, Gord Poschwatta. I was led up to his cold third floor cubicle office, an office filled with old computers and stacks of paperwork piled on various desks and tables. Gord began to explain the operations of the paper, but soon our conversation became more personal. I could tell that charac-

ter and people held priority over such things as operations and business. We began trading condensed life stories while we drank coffee and smoked. Gord told me how he had left the routines of a clichéd life and come to work for the newspaper. His story was wonderful to hear. Some of my negative atti-

tudes toward life were jabbed at by his decency and compassion. I left his office feeling honestly thankful for what I had just experienced.

I then had the opportunity to meet with Heather Stump, who handles newspaper distribution, dealing with Spare Change vendors on a personal basis.

My first attempt to get into Heather's office was unsuccessful. The room was full of people; Heather obviously didn't have the time to meet me. When I finally did get in and meet the energetic and smiling person behind the desk, people still came in and out of the office at a steady pace with all kinds of demands and requests. The vendors offered their thoughts, happy or sad, their jokes, their kindness, and their lives in conversation. One thing that was evident was that every person who came into the office that day left completely sat-

isfied, and happy. I saw Heather bend over backwards to deal with the needs that were placed in front of her. Some were more easily taken care of than others, but they were all handled with kindness and with compassion.

I knew that probably the biggest reason these people were forced to live marginal lives was that they had been treated unfairly by people they had encountered. The reason they came to the Spare Change office is that no one else cared enough to help them. I realized that Spare Change is intended to help improve their lives, and give them hope. As I watched and listened to Heather, it was obvious that she did all of this, and I was amazed. Truly amazed.

I walked up the stairs toward the door to begin my journey home. I fiercely craved my next visit. It was all so revealing and so very interesting. When I got outside, I turned and looked back at the Bissell Centre. It seemed so much bigger and brighter than when I first arrived. I suppose it seemed entirely different. If I were to try to describe it, I would say it was a shining facility filled with a whole bunch of tiny little rooms, and every one of these tiny little rooms had an extremely large door.

As I walked home, my head was filled with thoughts of all I had just learned. Soon though, these thoughts were distracted by the same feelings I was having on my way to the Bissell only a few hours before. As I stepped onto the bus that would take me back to my cozy little south-side home, I realized I still didn't know a damn thing. ♦



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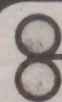
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# Emily

BY ALLISON KYDD



VIA THE GREYHOUND BUS

## There'd be a taxi to his apartment

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The story this far: When the bus stops in Winnipeg, Emily has forty minutes to make a big decision. Larry, her charming bus driver, seems to want to get to know her, but Jeremy's only a telephone call away. When she phones and hears the coldness in his voice, it's obvious that he's still not going to forgive her, not this time. And Larry's waiting.

Emily's hands were trembling as she scraped her belongings back into her bags. She wanted to rest her head on the shelf beside the phone books. She wanted to sink to the floor, sink into the floor - that'd be better still. To disappear off the face of the earth...

Most of all she wanted to stop caring, and if she stayed in one place the pain would flood over her again. There was only one way to make it better.

Three minutes later, Emily stood in the doorway and scanned the restaurant. There wasn't much business at this time of night, so it was

easy to pick out Larry. He was sitting with two other drivers in one of the red plastic booths near the kitchen entrance. She could see their grey uniformed legs and shoulders, a knapsack on the floor. All talking and laughing in that easy way that men have. As if they don't have a care in the world and nothing can touch them. So what if she'd learned it was generally an act.

She also noticed the booth was in the smoking section. The smell'd probably make her sick again, but she guessed she could stand it.

Maybe they were talking about her. No matter. If she was a woman who scared easily she wouldn't have survived this far.

Emily squared her shoulders and strode directly across the room. She was standing there by the time they knew she was coming.

"May I take your order, gentlemen?" she asked in her classiest voice.

Their three male faces were looking up at her, half-smiling, unsure

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what she'd do next. She enjoyed these odds, when she was up to it. Being in control. Not one of them would dare sneak a put-down look at her body.

Larry got up from his seat, gave her a courtly little nod and offered her the place beside him. She took her time sliding in, kept her chin high and her shoulders erect.

"I'm Jack," the younger of the two men across the table greeted her. She noticed that he'd stood up as well.

"Emily," she smiled her prettiest smile and reached out her hand. His was warm and wet with perspiration, but she pretended she didn't notice. For a minute she thought he might blush, so she gave him a break and turned to the man beside him.

Not green this one. He was smiling too but relaxed in his seat. Though his eyes were on her face, she felt he was measuring her anyway. He picked up his cigarette, didn't even ask her permission.

It was Larry who thought to ask.

"Do you mind if we smoke, Emily?"

She hadn't expected such a whole-some guy to be a smoker. Must have something to do with the late hours he worked. Anyway, she didn't want to come across like a spoil sport. After all, they were here first.

"I gotta be getting along anyway," said the older man. He smiled at her a little more kindly. "Nice to meet you, Emily. My old lady knows when my bus gets in, gets ticked off if I don't show up pretty quick."

The younger fellow didn't seem to want to leave. Obviously too innocent to know the lay of the land.

"Can I buy you a coffee, Emily?" he asked.

Larry answered for her.

"I've got that covered, Jack. Thanks anyway."

Emily relaxed into the spongy plastic seat and prepared to be spoiled. This was more like it.

Finally Jack got the message. "Well, I'm off," he said awkwardly.

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Larry reached across and gave him a pat on the arm.

"See you next week, bud. Oh, and you can send Samantha this way. Tell her we need coffee and menus."

When the waitress came, Larry called her Sam. She was young and fresh and spoke English like she was educated. Probably a student from the U.S., Emily figured. She didn't smile back, though Sam's grin had included them both.

Emily didn't like these odds as much, even if the other woman was only their waitress. She wished she was the one with a cigarette in her hand, something to hold onto.

There wasn't any real reason to feel outclassed, of course. She had her degree - Jeremy'd seen to that. He'd said maybe then they could talk about marriage. Again this thing he had about them being "equals". Though there was hurt in him saying they weren't equals the promise at the end made it easier. It also made her want to hurry - like going home to a lover

at the end of a journey.

But there was nobody waiting now. The tone of his voice over the phone couldn't be misunderstood. No one would be looking after her but herself. And the smarts she'd learned from university never rested easily on her like on those who were born to it. She always felt as if she was going to be found out.

Smarts about ordinary men were another story. Them she'd learned to handle. And she wasn't about to get forgotten.

She started to shrug out of her coat. Her shoulder rubbed against Larry's since he sat so close. Right away he got busy helping her and hanging her precious leather on the hook at the end of the booth. The waitress waited, still smiling, and asked if they'd decided yet.

Emily tried to remember how many twenties she still had in her wallet - only two, she thought. She shook her head.

She felt Larry's hand touch her

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knee under the table as he squeezed back in beside her.

"I'll look after this," he said. Then he was smiling up at Sam again and giving their order. That was okay.

Emily's mind was already running ahead. There'd be a taxi to his apartment - much better than a hotel room - kissing in the elevator, hardly able to keep their hands off each other until he'd opened the door and they were inside. She knew the scene so well.

She still kept her smile to herself though. The two most important things she'd learned from Marty were never to trust anyone completely and to use people when you can get away with it. This wouldn't even be using Larry, not really. She knew she could make him happy.

"So when are you going to show me the photos of your kids like you promised?" Sam was asking.

There was a very small pause before Larry answered. "I got them right here."

He brought an envelope out of his pocket. He didn't look at Emily or touch her this time. But over his shoulder she could see two smug, sandy-haired youngsters in designer running-shoes.

Emily knew what was coming next. "And your wife..." said Sam.

And there was the tall woman looking as if she'd never been hungry in her life. "I'm going to miss my bus," said Emily.

She pushed her way out of the booth and grabbed her coat, wincing as she heard the sound of fabric tearing. When she was almost out the door someone touched her arm. Sam handed her the carry-on bag. Her face seemed concerned.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I thought you should know. Some of these guys get away with too much."

"Piss off," said Emily. ♦

End of installment nine -  
To be continued.

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